

Creator deity

A **creator deity** or **creator god** (often called **the Creator**) is a deity or god responsible for the creation of the Earth, world, and universe in human religion and mythology. In monotheism, the single God is often also the creator. A number of monolatristic traditions separate a secondary creator from a primary transcendent being, identified as a primary creator.^[1]

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Monotheism

Atenism

Initiated by Pharaoh Akhenaten and Queen Nefertiti around 1330 BCE, during the New Kingdom period in ancient Egyptian history. They built an entirely new capital city (Akhetaten) for themselves and worshippers of their sole creator god on a wilderness. His father used to worship Aten alongside other gods of their polytheistic religion. Aten, for a long time before his father's time, was revered as a god among the many gods and goddesses in Egypt. Atenism faded away after the death of the pharaoh. Despite different views, Atenism is considered by some scholars to be one of the frontiers of monotheism in human history.

Abrahamic religions

Judaism

The Genesis creation narrative is the creation myth^[a] of both Judaism and Christianity.^[2] The narrative is made up of two stories, roughly equivalent to the first two chapters of the Book of Genesis. In the first, Elohim (the Hebrew generic word for God) creates the heavens and the Earth, the animals, and mankind in six days, then rests on, blesses and sanctifies the seventh (i.e. the Biblical Sabbath). In the second story, God, now referred to by the personal name Yahweh, creates Adam, the first man, from dust and places him in the Garden of Eden, where he is given dominion over the animals. Eve, the first woman, is created from Adam and as his companion.

It expounds themes parallel to those in Mesopotamian mythology, emphasizing the Israelite people's belief in one God.^[3] The first major comprehensive draft of the Pentateuch (the series of five books which begins with Genesis and ends with Deuteronomy) was composed in the late 7th or the 6th century BCE (the Jahwist source) and was later expanded by other authors (the Priestly source) into a work very like Genesis as known today.^[4] The two sources can be identified in the creation narrative: Priestly and Jahwistic.^[5] The combined narrative is a critique of the Mesopotamian theology of creation: Genesis affirms monotheism and denies polytheism.^[6] Robert Alter described the combined narrative as "compelling in its archetypal character, its adaptation of myth to monotheistic ends".^[7]

Christianity

The Abrahamic creation narrative is made up of two stories, roughly equivalent to the two first chapters of the Book of Genesis.^[8] The first account (1:1 through 2:3) employs a repetitious structure of divine fiat and fulfillment, then the statement "And there was evening and there was morning, the [xth] day," for each of the six days of creation. In each of the first three days there is an act of division: day one divides the darkness from light, day two the "waters above" from the "waters below", and day three the sea from the land. In each of the next three days these divisions are populated: day four populates the darkness and light with sun, moon, and stars; day five populates seas and skies with fish and fowl; and finally, land-based creatures and mankind populate the land.^[9]

The first (the Priestly story) was concerned with the cosmic plan of creation, while the second (the Yahwist story) focuses on man as cultivator of his environment and as a moral agent.^[8] The second account, in contrast to the regimented seven-day scheme of Genesis 1, uses a simple flowing narrative style that proceeds from God's forming the first man through the Garden of Eden to the creation of the first woman and the institution of marriage. In contrast to the omnipotent God of Genesis 1 creating a god-like humanity, the God of Genesis 2 can fail as well as succeed. The humanity he creates is not god-like, but is punished for acts which would lead to their becoming god-like (Genesis 3:1-24) and the order and method of creation itself differs.^[10] "Together, this combination of parallel character and contrasting profile point to the different origin of materials in Genesis 1:1 and Gen 2:4, however elegantly they have now been combined."^[11]

An early conflation of Greek philosophy with the narratives in the Hebrew Bible came from Philo of Alexandria (d. AD 50), writing in the context of Hellenistic Judaism. Philo equated the Hebrew creator-deity Yahweh with Aristotle's unmoved mover (First Cause)^{[12][13]} in an attempt to prove that the Jews had held monotheistic views even before the Greeks.

A similar theoretical proposition was demonstrated by Thomas Aquinas, who linked Aristotelian philosophy with the Christian faith, followed by the statement that God is the First Being, the First Mover, and is Pure Act.^[14]

The deuterocanonical 2 Maccabees has two relevant passages. At chapter 7, it narrows about the mother of a Jewish proto-martyr telling to her son: "I beseech thee, my son, look upon heaven and earth, and all that is in them: and consider that God made them out of nothing, and mankind also";^{[15][16]} at chapter 1, it refers a solemn prayer hymned by Jonathan, Nehemiah and the Priest of Israel, while making sacrifices in honour of God: "O Lord, Lord God, Creator of all things, who art fearefull, and strong, and righteous, and mercifull, and the onely, and gracious king".^[17] The Prologue to Gospel of John begins with: "In the beginning was the Word, & the Word was with God, and the Word was God. / 2 The same was in the beginning with God. / 3 All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.".^[18]

Christianity affirms the creation by God since its early time in the Apostles' Creed ("I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.", 1st century AD), that is symmetrical to the Nicene Creed (4th century AD).

Nowadays, theologians debate whether the Bible itself teaches if this creation by God is a creation *ex nihilo*. Traditional interpreters^[19] argue on grammatical and syntactical grounds that this is the meaning of Genesis 1:1, which is commonly rendered: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." However, other interpreters^[20] understand creation *ex nihilo* as a 2nd-century theological development. According to this view, church fathers opposed notions appearing in *pre-Christian creation myths* and in Gnosticism—notions of creation by a demiurge out of a primordial state of matter (known in religious studies as *chaos* after the Greek term used by Hesiod in his *Theogony*).^[21] Jewish thinkers took up the idea,^[22] which became important to Judaism.

Islam

According to Islam, the creator deity, God, known in Arabic as Allah, is the all-powerful and all-knowing Creator, Sustainer, Ordainer, and Judge of the universe. Creation is seen as an act of divine choice and mercy, one with a grand purpose: "And We ^[note 1] did not create the heaven and earth and that between them in play."^[23] Rather, the purpose of humanity is to be tested: "Who has created death and life, that He may test you which of you is best in deed. And He is the All-Mighty, the Oft-Forgiving;"^[24] Those who pass the test are rewarded with Paradise: "Verily for the Righteous there will be a fulfilment of (the heart's) desires;"^[25]

According to the Islamic teachings, God exists above the heavens and the creation itself. The Quran mentions, "He it is Who created for you all that is on earth. Then He Istawa (rose over) towards the heaven and made them seven heavens and He is the All-Knower of everything."^[26] At the same time, God is unlike anything in creation: "There is nothing like unto Him, and He is the Hearing, the Seeing."^[27] and nobody can perceive God in totality: "Vision perceives Him not, but He perceives [all] vision; and He is the Subtle, the Acquainted."^[28] God in Islam is not only majestic and sovereign, but also a personal God: "And indeed We have created man, and We know what his ownself whispers to him. And We are nearer to him than his jugular vein (by Our Knowledge)."^[29] Allah commands the believers to constantly remember

Him ("O you who have believed, remember Allah with much remembrance"^[30]) and to invoke Him alone ("And whoever invokes besides Allah another deity for which he has no proof - then his account is only with his Lord. Indeed, the disbelievers will not succeed."^[31]).

Islam teaches that God as referenced in the Quran is the only god and the same God worshipped by members of other Abrahamic religions such as Christianity and Judaism.

Sikhism

One of the biggest responsibilities in the faith of Sikhism is to worship God as "The Creator", termed Waheguru, who is shapeless, timeless, and sightless, i.e., Nirankar, Akal, and Alakh Niranjan. The religion only takes after the belief in "One God for All" or Ik Onkar.

Bahá'í Faith

In the Bahá'í Faith God is the imperishable, uncreated being who is the source of all existence.^[32] He is described as "a personal God, unknowable, inaccessible, the source of all Revelation, eternal, omniscient, omnipresent and almighty".^{[33][34]} Although transcendent and inaccessible directly, his image is reflected in his creation. The purpose of creation is for the created to have the capacity to know and love its creator.^[35]

Mandaeism

In Mandaeism, Hayyi Rabbi (lit=The Great Life), or 'The Great Living God',^[36] is the supreme God from which all things emanate. He is also known as 'The First Life', since during the creation of the material world, Yushamin emanated from Hayyi Rabbi as the "Second Life."^[37] "The principles of the Mandaean doctrine: the belief of the only one great God, Hayyi Rabbi, to whom all absolute properties belong; He created all the worlds, formed the soul through his power, and placed it by means of angels into the human body. So He created Adam and Eve, the first man and woman."^[38] Mandaeans recognize God to be the eternal, creator of all, the one and only in domination who has no partner.^[39]

Monolatry

Monolatristic traditions would separate a secondary creator from the primary transcendent being, identified as a primary creator.^[1] According to Gaudiya Vaishnavas, Brahma is the secondary creator and not the supreme.^[40] Vishnu is the primary creator. According to Vaishnava belief Vishnu creates the basic universal shell and provides all the raw materials and also places the living entities within the material world, fulfilling their own independent will. Brahma works with the materials provided by Vishnu to actually create what are believed to be planets in Puranic terminology, and he supervises the population of them.^[41]

Monism

Monism is the philosophy that asserts oneness as its fundamental premise, and it contradicts the dualism-based theistic premise that there is a creator God that is eternal and separate from the rest of existence. There are two types of monism, namely spiritual monism which holds that all spiritual reality is one, and material monism which holds that everything including all material reality is one and the same thing.^[42]

Non-creationism

Buddhism

Buddhism denies a creator deity and posits that mundane deities such as Mahabrahma are misperceived to be a creator.^[43]

Jainism

Jainism does not support belief in a creator deity. According to Jain doctrine, the universe and its constituents - soul, matter, space, time, and principles of motion have always existed (a static universe similar to that of Epicureanism and steady state cosmological model). All the constituents and actions are governed by universal natural laws. It is not possible to create matter out of nothing and hence the sum total of matter in the universe remains the same (similar to law of conservation of mass). Similarly, the soul of each living being is unique and uncreated and has existed since beginningless time.^{[a][44]}

The Jain theory of causation holds that a cause and its effect are always identical in nature and therefore a conscious and immaterial entity like God cannot create a material entity like the universe. Furthermore, according to the Jain concept of divinity, any soul who destroys its karmas and desires achieves liberation. A soul who destroys all its passions and desires has no desire to interfere in the working of the universe. Moral rewards and sufferings are not the work of a divine being, but a result of an innate moral order in the cosmos; a self-regulating mechanism whereby the individual reaps the fruits of his own actions through the workings of the karmas.

Through the ages, Jain philosophers have adamantly rejected and opposed the concept of creator and omnipotent God and this has resulted in Jainism being labeled as nāstika darsana or atheist philosophy by the rival religious philosophies. The theme of non-creationism and absence of omnipotent God and divine grace runs strongly in all the philosophical dimensions of Jainism, including its cosmology, karma, moksa and its moral code of conduct. Jainism asserts a religious and virtuous life is possible without the idea of a creator god.^[45]

Polytheism

In polytheistic creation, the world often comes into being organically, e.g. sprouting from a primal seed, sexually, by miraculous birth (sometimes by parthenogenesis), by hieros gamos, violently, by the slaying of a primeval monster, or artificially, by a divine demiurge or "craftsman". Sometimes, a god is involved, wittingly or unwittingly, in bringing about creation. Examples include:

- Sub-Saharan African contexts:
 - Mbombo of Bakuba mythology, who vomited out the world upon feeling a stomachache
 - Unkulunkulu in Zulu mythology
- American contexts:
 - Nanabozho (Great Rabbit), Ojibwe deity, a shape-shifter and a cocreator of the world^{[46][47]}
 - Cōātlīcue in Aztec mythology
 - Chiminigagua (and/or Bague) in Muisca mythology



In Vaishnava Puranic scriptures, Brahma emerges on a lotus from Vishnu's navel as Vishnu creates the cosmic cycle, after being emerged by Shiva. Shaivite texts describe that Shiva told Vishnu to create, Shiva ordered Vishnu to make Brahma.

- Viracocha in Inca mythology
- A trickster deity in the form of a Raven in Inuit mythology
- Near Eastern contexts:
 - Egyptian mythology
 - Atum in Ennead, whose semen becomes the primal component of the universe
 - Ptah creating the universe by the Word
 - Neith, who wove all of the universe and existence into being on her loom.
 - 'Ēl in Canaanite religion
 - Marduk killing Tiamat in the Babylonian Enûma Eliš
- Asian contexts:
 - Atingkok Maru Sidaba in Manipuri mythology, the creator of the universe
 - Esege Malan in Mongolian mythology, king of the skies
 - Kamuy in Ainu mythology, who built the world on the back of a trout
 - Izanagi and Izanami-no-Mikoto in Japanese mythology, who churned the ocean with a spear, creating the islands of Japan
 - In Hinduism, Lord Brahma is the creator of the universe.
- European contexts:
 - The sons of Borr slaying the primeval giant Ymir in Norse mythology
 - Rod in Slavic mythology
 - Ipmil or Radien-Áhči (Radien Father) in Sámi mythology
- Oceanic contexts:
 - Makemake, creator of humanity, the god of fertility and the chief god of the "Tangata manu" or "bird-man" cult of Rapa Nui mythology.
 - Ranginui, the Sky Father, and Papatūānuku, the Earth Mother in Māori mythology

Platonic demiurge

Plato, in his dialogue Timaeus, describes a creation myth involving a being called the demiurge (δημιουργός "craftsman"). Neoplatonism and Gnosticism continued and developed this concept. In Neoplatonism, the demiurge represents the second cause or dyad, after the monad. In Gnostic dualism, the demiurge is an imperfect spirit and possibly an evil being, transcended by divine Fullness (Pleroma). Unlike the Abrahamic God, Plato's demiurge is unable to create ex-nihilo.

Hinduism

Hinduism is a diverse system of thought with beliefs spanning monotheism, polytheism, panentheism, pantheism, pandeism, monism, and atheism among others;^{[48][49][note 2]} and its concept of creator deity is complex and depends upon each individual and the tradition and philosophy followed. Hinduism is sometimes referred to as henotheistic (i.e., involving devotion to a single god while accepting the existence of others), but any such term is an overgeneralization.^[50]

The Nasadiya Sukta (*Creation Hymn*) of the Rig Veda is one of the earliest texts^[51] which "demonstrates a sense of metaphysical speculation" about what created the universe, the concept of god(s) and The One, and whether even The One knows how the universe came into being.^{[52][53]} The Rig Veda praises various

deities, none superior nor inferior, in a henotheistic manner.^[54] The hymns repeatedly refer to One Truth and Reality. The "One Truth" of Vedic literature, in modern era scholarship, has been interpreted as monotheism, monism, as well as a deified Hidden Principles behind the great happenings and processes of nature.^[55]

The post-Vedic texts of Hinduism offer multiple theories of cosmogony, many involving Brahma. These include *Sarga* (primary creation of universe) and *Visarga* (secondary creation), ideas related to the Indian thought that there are two levels of reality, one primary that is unchanging (metaphysical) and other secondary that is always changing (empirical), and that all observed reality of the latter is in an endless repeating cycle of existence, that cosmos and life we experience is continually created, evolved, dissolved and then re-created.^[56] The primary creator is extensively discussed in Vedic cosmogonies with *Brahman* or *Purusha* or *Devi* among the terms used for the primary creator,^{[56][57]} while the Vedic and post-Vedic texts name different gods and goddesses as secondary creators (often Brahma in post-Vedic texts), and in some cases a different god or goddess is the secondary creator at the start of each cosmic cycle (*kalpa*, aeon).^{[58][56]}



Brahma is often associated with Creation in Hinduism, however has been demoted to a secondary creator in post-Vedic period

Brahma is a "secondary creator" as described in the *Mahabharata* and *Puranas*, and among the most studied and described.^{[59][60][61]} Born from a lotus emerging from the navel of Vishnu, Brahma creates all the forms in the universe, but not the primordial universe itself.^[62] In contrast, the Shiva-focused *Puranas* describe Brahma and Vishnu to have been created by Ardhanarishvara, that is half Shiva and half Parvati; or alternatively, Brahma was born from Rudra, or Vishnu, Shiva and Brahma creating each other cyclically in different aeons (*kalpa*).^[58] Thus in most Puranic texts, Brahma's creative activity depends on the presence and power of a higher god.^[63]

In other versions of creation, the creator deity is the one who is equivalent to the Brahman, the metaphysical reality in Hinduism. In Vaishnavism, Vishnu creates Brahma and orders him to order the rest of universe. In Shaivism, Shiva may be treated as the creator. In Shaktism, the Great Goddess creates the Trimurti.^{[58][56][64]}

Other

Chinese traditional cosmology

Pangu can be interpreted as another creator deity. In the beginning there was nothing in the universe except a formless chaos. However this chaos began to coalesce into a cosmic egg for eighteen thousand years. Within it, the perfectly opposed principles of yin and yang became balanced and Pangu emerged (or woke up) from the egg. Pangu is usually depicted as a primitive, hairy giant with horns on his head (like the Greek Pan) and clad in furs. Pangu set about the task of creating the world: he separated Yin from Yang with a swing of his giant axe, creating the Earth (murky *Yin*) and the Sky (clear *Yang*). To keep them separated, Pangu stood between them and pushed up the Sky. This task took eighteen thousand years, with each day the sky grew ten feet higher, the Earth ten feet wider, and Pangu ten feet taller. In some versions of the story, Pangu is aided in this task by the four most prominent beasts, namely the Turtle, the Qilin, the Phoenix, and the Dragon.

After eighteen thousand years^[65] had elapsed, Pangu was laid to rest. His breath became the wind; his voice the thunder; left eye the sun and right eye the moon; his body became the mountains and extremes of the world; his blood formed rivers; his muscles the fertile lands; his facial hair the stars and milky way; his fur the bushes and forests; his bones the valuable minerals; his bone marrows sacred diamonds; his sweat fell as rain; and the fleas on his fur carried by the wind became human beings all over the world.

The first writer to record the myth of Pangu was Xu Zheng during the Three Kingdoms period.

Shangdi is another creator deity, possibly prior to Pangu; sharing concepts similar to Abrahamic faiths.

Kazakh

According to Kazakh folk tales, Jasagnan is the creator of the world.^[66]

See also

- Aboriginal Australian mythology
 - Dreamtime
- Biblical cosmology
- Cosmological argument
- Creationism
- Dating creation
- Deism
- Existence
- Intelligent designer
- Tzimtzum

Notes

- a. The term myth is used here in its academic sense, meaning "a traditional story consisting of events that are ostensibly historical, though often supernatural, explaining the origins of a cultural practice or natural phenomenon." It is *not* being used to mean "something that is false".

1. majestic plural
2. Ninian Smart (2007). "Polytheism" (<http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-38143/polytheism>). *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Encyclopædia Britannica Online. Retrieved 5 July 2007.

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3. Sarna 1997, p. 50.
4. Davies 2007, p. 37.
5. Bandstra 2008, p. 37.
6. Wenham 2003b, p. 37.

7. Alter 2004, p. xii.
8. Alter 1981, p. 141.
9. Ruiten 2000, pp. 9–10.
10. Carr 1996, p. 62-64.
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13. Plato Laws Book X, Public Domain-Project Gutenberg. "ATHENIAN: Then I suppose that I must repeat the singular argument of those who manufacture the soul according to their own impious notions; they affirm that which is the first cause of the generation and destruction of all things, to be not first, but last, and that which is last to be first, and hence they have fallen into error about the true nature of the Gods... Then we must say that self-motion being the origin of all motions, and the first which arises among things at rest as well as among things in motion, is the eldest and mightiest principle of change, and that which is changed by another and yet moves other is second."
14. "On the simplicity of God, in " Summa Theologiae", Part I, Question 3" (<https://web.archive.org/web/20111002014207/https://dhsprory.org/thomas/summa/FP/FP003.html>). *Priory of Dominican Order* (in Latin and English). Translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province. Benziger Bros. edition. 1947. Archived from the original (<https://dhsprory.org/thomas/summa/FP/FP003.html>) on 2 October 2011. Retrieved 6 October 2018. "Ostensum est autem supra quod Deus est primum movens immobile. Unde manifestum est quod Deus non est corpus. Secundo, quia necesse est id quod est primum ens, esse in actu, et nullo modo in potentia. Licet enim in uno et eodem quod exit de potentia in actum, prius sit potentia quam actus tempore, simpliciter tamen actus prior est potentia, quia quod est in potentia, non reducitur in actum nisi per ens actu. Ostensum est autem supra quod Deus est primum ens. Impossibile est igitur quod in Deo sit aliquid in potential... . Now it has been already proved (Question [2], Article [3]), that God is the First Mover, and is Himself unmoved. Therefore it is clear that God is not a body. Secondly, because the first being must of necessity be in act, and in no way in potentiality. For although in any single thing that passes from potentiality to actuality, the potentiality is prior in time to the actuality; nevertheless, absolutely speaking, actuality is prior to potentiality; for whatever is in potentiality can be reduced into actuality only by some being in actuality. Now it has been already proved that God is the First Being. It is therefore impossible that in God there should be any potentiality."
15. "1611 King James Bible. Second book of Maccabees, chapter 7, verse 8" (https://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/2-Maccabees-Chapter-7_Original-1611-KJV/). *kingjamesbibleonline.org*. Archived (https://web.archive.org/web/20170420054917/https://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/2-Maccabees-Chapter-7_Original-1611-KJV/) from the original on 20 April 2017.
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